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ABSTRACT

Journalist Isabel Valle lived and traveled for 1 year with the family of Raul and Maria Elena Martinez, migrant farmworkers who make their permanent home in south Texas. Her reports appeared every Sunday in the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin's award-winning series "Fields of Toil." This book compiles those weekly reports, which reveal the issues that shape the lives of migrant workers and their families. Part I, "July-October," examines the routines of the migrant life, including the uncertainty of finding work and the continuous grind of moving from place to place; housing in chicken coops and trailers; children's work in the fields and its negative effects on their education; the support network provided by strong family ties; health problems and access to health care; job hazards; and the journey home. Part II, "November-February," describes the South Texas Valley and Mexican American culture; illegal immigration, drug smuggling, and the Border Patrol; the local elementary school, St. Edward's University, and the College Assistance Migrant Program; the role of the United Farm Workers; and preparations for the trip north. Part III, "March-June," discusses the asparagus harvest in Pasco, Washington; the unsettled school lives of migrant children and their parents' strong educational aspirations; relations between the migrant community and local businesses and services, including language issues; and the unending toil of migrant women. Photographs and an index are included. (SV)

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